

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 0714

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CZ
SUBJECT: US-CZECHOSLOVAK PROBLEMS

1. SUMMARY: DURING MARCH 14 CALL ON MFA SIXTH DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR ZANTOVSKY, DCM REVIEWED CURRENT BILATERAL PROBLEMS, ASKED FOR MFA ASSISTANCE IN OVERCOMING BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES TO IMPENDING VISIT TO PRAGUE OF FAA REPS, AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT US-GOC BILATERAL RELATIONS WOULD IMPROVE IN COMING MONTHS. ZANTOVSKY ACKNOWLEDGED CURRENT STRAINS, TRIED TO ABSOLVE CZECHOSLOVAKS OF BLAME FOR PRESENT DIFFICULTIES, INDICATED HE WOULD HELP FACILITATE THE FAA VISIT, AND HOPED FOR PROGRESS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION OF EXCHANGES AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. EXCHANGES AGREEMENT: DCM OPENED DISCUSSION BY NOTING THAT AMBASSADOR HAD JUST RETURNED FROM WASHINGTON, WHERE HE HAD DRAWN ATTENTION TO RECENT REMARKS BY ZANTOVSKY AND DEPUTY MINISTER THRLIK THAT CZECHOSLOVAK SIDE IS ANXIOUS TO MOVE FORWARD AS FAST AS POSSIBLE TOWARD CONCLUSION OF NEGOTIATIONS ON IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS FOR DRAFT US-GOC EXCHANGES ACCORD. DCM EXPLAINED THAT NEXT STEPS ARE CURRENTLY UNDER STUDY IN DEPARTMENT, AND EMBASSY EXPECTS TO RECEIVE INSTRUCTIONS SOON ON WHERE WE GO FROM HERE. ZANTOVSKY
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HOPED FOR POSITIVE RESULTS IN WASHINGTON THAT WOULD PERMIT BOTH SIDES "TO USE CONCLUSION OF THIS AGREEMENT AS AN IMPETUS TO IMPROVED RELATIONS, IF WE CANNOT YET SETTLE OUR NUMBER ONE PROBLEM"--I.E. CLAIMS/GOLD.

3. A LOOK AT CURRENT DIFFICULTIES. DCM BRIEFLY SURVEYED PRESENT BILATERAL DIFFICULTIES, NOTING PROBLEMS

OVER JOURNALISTS, INCREASED EMBASSY FRUSTRATIONS IN DEALING WITH VARIOUS GOC OFFICES, LACK OF PROGRESS IN EFFORTS TO MOVE THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF PRAGUE FROM ITS FACILITIES IN THE EMBASSY TO A SUITABLE NEW SITE, AND RECENT ACTIONS BY LOCAL POLICE TO STOP, AND EVIDENTLY INTIMIDATE, VISITORS TO USIS LIBRARY. ZANTOVSKY REJOINED THAT FOR THEIR PART CZECHOSLOVAKS WANTED TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH USG BUT THEY CONTINUALLY FOUND AMERICAN SIDE PLACING OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF PROGRESS. HE COMPLAINED OF "ATTACKS" BY AMERICAN JOURNALISTS, NOTING IN PASSING THAT CZECHOSLOVAKS WERE NOT ESPECIALLY HAPPY WITH RECENT REPORTAGE OF NYT CORRESPONDENT DAVID ANDELMAN. ZANTOVSKY ASSERTED GOC HAD "THE RIGHT TO PROTECT ITSELF." HE ALSO REITERATED HIS RECENT CHARGE THAT EMBASSY OFFICERS WERE NOT OBEYING CZECHOSLOVAK TRAFFIC REGULATIONS (PRAGUE 0576) A CHARGE THAT DCM REFUTED BY POINTING OUT THAT IN THIS SPECIFIC CASE ALLUDED TO BY ZANTOVSKY, EMBOFF HAD DRIVEN OFF A MAIN HIGHWAY ONTO A SIDE ROAD, AFTER WHICH SOLDIERS SWIFTLY MOVED A PORTABLE NO-ENTRY SIGN INTO PLACE AND TRIED TO TRAP THE EMBOFF BY PLACING A BARRICADE ACROSS THE ROAD. DCM ADDED THAT ALL EMBASSY PERSONNEL WERE UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPECT LOCAL TRAFFIC SIGNS.

4. FAA VISIT. DCM THEN TURNED TO DIFFICULTIES EMBASSY WAS ENCOUNTERING IN ARRANGING MARCH 16-18 VISIT OF FAA REPS, WHO WISHED TO EXPLAIN TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANTAGES OF NEW MICRO-WAVE LANDING SYSTEM FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE USE AT CZECHOSLOVAK AIRPORTS. CONFIDENTIAL

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A LOCAL CUSTOMS OFFICIAL HAD THREATENED TO IMPOUND FILM BEING CARRIED BY FAA REPS ON THEIR ARRIVAL IN PRAGUE MARCH 16 AND RETAIN IT FOR AT LEAST THREE DAYS --THOUGH FAA OFFICIALS REQUIRED FILM FOR THEIR MARCH 17 DEMONSTRATION AND THEIR DEPARTURE MARCH 18. THIS WAS ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT FOR EMBASSY TO UNDERSTAND, SINCE T HE VISIT HAD BEEN IN PREPARATION, WITH MFA HELP, FOR NEARLY TWO MONTHS. YET, LAST-MINUTE BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES MIGHT CAUSE CANCELLATION OF A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL EVENT. ZANTOVSKY PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THIS PROBLEM--AND, IN FACT, MOVED PROMPTLY TO ELIMINATE THE OBSTACLE AFTER DCM'S DEPARTURE.

5. ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS. BEFORE DEPARTING, DCM THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT TO POINT TO SOME COUNTER-BALANCING POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS DESPITE OVERALL STRAINS. EMBASSY WAS PLEASED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO LEARN THAT U. OF VIRGINIA WOULD PROBABLY BRING CZECH PROFESSOR VASEK TO ITS FACULTY FOR 1978-79 ACADEMIC YEAR. ALSO, EMBASSY HAD HEARD FROM A WELL-TO-DO NEBRASKAN THAT HE WOULD TRY TO ORGANIZE A TRIP TO US BY A MORAVANKA FOLK-DANCE TROUPE.

OTHER EXCHANGES ALSO WERE GOING FORWARD; THUS OUR RELATIONS WERE NOT AT A COMPLETE STANDSTILL. ZANTOVSKY AGREED AND RE-EMPHASIZED

HIS HOPE FOR FURTHER PROGRESS--ESPECIALLY IN WRAPPING UP THE
EXCHANGES AGREEMENT.
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